

WAIT ON THE LORD

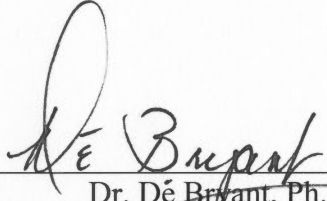
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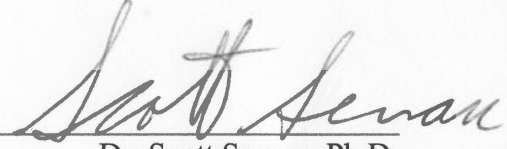
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Dedication

This thesis work is dedicated to my late parents, Booker and Helen Carter who loved me unconditionally and instilled so much love, laughter and creativity into my spirit. You are still missed to tears at times, but your spirits forever live in me, Debi, your grandchildren and even your great-grandchild, Max! That fact alone...makes me so very happy.

To my sister and best friend, Ms. Deborah Harrison, I offer my sincerest gratitude for taking the time to read and reread every one of my revisions. Your feedback, inspiration and reassurance were the calming presence to my daily inner storms. Oh, how I love you!

A special dedication to my beautiful children, DeBorah, Junnie, and Carter, who encouraged me to finish, told me how proud they were, and stayed the heck away from me during my research! I love you all so much. I did it!!

And to my special nephew/son, Jason, thank you for just being your upbeat, kind and loving self...you know I love you!

This work is also dedicated to my late Aunt Florence...my friend, confidante and biggest supporter. I thought you would be here to see me walking down the aisle to get my Master of Liberal Studies degree, but you were so tired and God saw fit to bring you home to be with all your family in heaven. Before the graduation began, I could not stop crying, but I knew you would not have wanted that...so, I got it together (you better believe it!). I also dedicate this work to Auntie and Aunt Katherine....my aunts who have always cheered me on and brought laughter to my soul...whether they knew it or not!

To my cousins, April and Jeanne, thank you for your unconditional love, support and thoughtfulness! The 'little' things you did were not little at all!

Lastly, I dedicate this thesis to my late grandmothers, Josephine Redding and Bessie Carter. Your prayers and resilience continue to flow through the generations.

Finally, and unequivocally, BLACK LIVES MATTER, they always have and they always will.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement.....	iii
Introduction.....	1
The Social Background.....	11
Wait on the Lord	15
ACT I.....	18
ACT II	34
ACT III.....	50
ACT IV	67
Bibliography.....	78
Curriculum Vitae	

Acknowledgement

Firstly, I acknowledge my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who is truly the head of my life. I thank Him for giving me the strength to endure until the end. Without Him, I would have failed miserably.

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Finally, I would like to acknowledge and thank Mrs. Ramona Tiara Smedley-Oyesanmi of Types 4 U, LLC for formatting my thesis to its required format. You assured me all deadlines would be met and that you would make any and all the necessary revisions to my satisfaction... you most certainly did! Thank you for your professionalism and support. You took my project very seriously and I am so appreciative of your commitment to my work.

Introduction

African American theatre was created, not only for entertainment, but also to educate audiences about the wide-ranged and complicated facets of black lives. *Wait on the Lord's* setting takes in a black church community under the Evangelical umbrella. "The term "evangelical" comes from the Greek word *euangelion*, meaning "the good news" or the "gospel." Thus, the evangelical faith focuses on the "good news" of salvation brought to sinners by Jesus Christ. Evangelicals are a vibrant and diverse group, including believers found in many churches, denominations and nations. This community brings together Reformed, Holiness, Anabaptist, Pentecostal, Charismatic and other traditions," ("What is an Evangelical?," 2016). Traditionally, these groups have specific doctrinal views surrounding sex and marriage. The permissible marriages are heterosexual unions. Furthermore, sexual relationships are only sanctioned after marriage. Premarital sex is biblically termed 'fornication' and labelled as sin. There are no grey areas. In direct contrast of these views is the secular world where sex is limitless and not confined to marriage. The media is the main promoter of this ideology. Whether good or bad, whether you agree or not, sex is everywhere: television, commercials, movies, newspapers, billboards, magazines—everywhere. Even in the midst of one's spiritual pursuit, these influences are ever present.

This theatrical production will focus on the lives of six heterosexual women's relationships with either their husbands, fiancées, or boyfriends while dealing with issues such as adultery, domestic violence, betrayal and pregnancy. The intent of this work was to use this platform to voice the struggles of those women desiring male companionship

while trying to adhere to their ministries' biblically based teachings. Creating this space around a theatrical performance offered a more personal authenticity to the topic, as well as an immediate connection of emotions with the audience that lacks in films.

An intricate piece of Africana history was and always will be religion. No matter what calamitous situation took place in their (African Americans) surroundings, the unequivocal belief in a higher power granted a measure of peace in the proverbial storm. Resulting from this unwavering confidence, the Africana faith remained steadfast and unmovable. It is this faith in God or a higher power that populates the African American churches...a population dominated by women. "More than eight-in-ten black women (84%) say religion is very important to them, and roughly six-in-ten (59%) say they attend religious services at least once a week. No group of men or women from any other racial or ethnic background exhibits comparably high levels of religious observance," (PewResearchCenter, 2009). This inconsistency is a direct correlation with the issues of the characters in *Wait on the Lord*.

These six characters' quests for husbands, as well as, adherence to their doctrines caused havoc in some of their lives. Margaret was the first character introduced. It was her wedding day and she was preparing for the ceremony clad in her wedding dress. She referenced her soon-to-be husband as a "good, good God-fearing man." The implication was that her relationship will be a healthy one. The second character was Sheila, an educated, successful chemical engineer. She insinuated her need for marriage as sexual rather than financial support. As previously noted, premarital sex was not an option. Her husband would end up leaving her, but not before emptying all the bank accounts. The third woman, Jheri, was married and a visible victim of domestic violence. The next two

characters introduced were noted as best friends, Sharon and Alicen. Alicen was very distraught, as the man she loved had just broken off their engagement. She tearfully admitted to her best friend that she had a sexual relationship with him. Unbeknownst to Alicen...her dear friend, Sharon, was in love with and would eventually end up marrying her former fiancé. Needless to say, he continued being a womanizer in the marriage. The last character was Tonya, who got pregnant resulting from a secret sexual relationship with a visiting church evangelist. In all these instances, the women were committed to God and their church doctrine. While the play is entitled, *Wait on the Lord*, some of these women appeared to have made choices hastily resulting from wanting a man and/or experiencing sex. In the case of Jheri, a victim of domestic violence, she stayed in her abusive marriage resulting from her feelings of shame surrounding the prospect of divorce as a Christian. The characters' adherence to their church's strict guidelines played tremendous roles in their relationship decisions. Furthermore, while prayer is a viable and spiritual tool to assist one's decision making, it should not be deemed the catchall. For example, Jheri approached one of the 'church mothers' to discuss her abusive husband. Typically, in an African American church, a 'church mother' is an older woman to whom the senior leadership of the church has given authority to counsel the laity, particularly the women. Since they are very influential and somewhat considered the pillars of the church, their advice is deemed invaluable. The play's church mother's advice was to '*pray more*,' which passively indicated that Jheri was not praying enough for her situation. Additionally, that advice could be interpreted as victim blaming, as if you were truly praying, you would not be in this abusive situation. A prayer life is considered one of the essential practices of the believer in most churches, but especially

in the black church. “More than three-in-four African Americans (76%) say they pray on at least a daily basis,” (PewResearchCenter, 2009). However, if someone is being physically abused in any relationship, the first suggestion should be separation from their abuser...*then prayer!* While Jheri’s decision to stay in an abusive marriage was her own, the social pressure from the church mother certainly influenced her decision. Additionally, this work articulated the need for more compassion and less judgement from the black church community. We have a responsibility to and for one another...whether we want it or not. The only way our journeys can truly be successful is with unconditional love and respect towards one another. If this message resonates *anywhere*...it must do so in our churches!

When my collegiate career initially began in 1981 upon my graduation from high school, I would have never imagined that it would have taken me 35 years to actually obtain my bachelor and master degrees from IU South Bend! My journey included many winding roads, turns and detours. However, I have no regrets...I would not allow myself to have them. My journey was exactly as it should have been, as I am a woman of faith that truly believes the words found in the scripture Romans 8:28 which says: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”.

Upon graduating as a *seasoned* student from IU South Bend in 2013, I had the mindset that I was done with school. I was extremely thankful that I had *finally* accomplished my educational goal of so long ago and I was satisfied. It was not until my final semester that a speaker for the Master of Liberal Studies program came to one of my classes and spoke about the program. It was very intriguing. For the first time in my life, I

thought about pursuing a Masters. I came up with so many excuses on why I should not do it, but had a counter for each one. When I began the first class of my MLS journey, I knew I had made the right decision. “Stimulating” is the word that would sum up my MLS experience at IU South Bend. There is no doubt that I have become a better, caring, informed and more accepting person because of it.

What were the underlying causes, motivations, sources of inspiration, etc., for your project?

As a playwright, I knew the ‘creative option’ was the best and most logical path for me. I am the founder of a murder mystery performance troupe called JustUs Performances. I wrote all the scripts, directed and acted, as well. The MLS degree allowed me to utilize these skills in lieu of a more traditional thesis. Furthermore, being a product of the black church, I had some expertise of it and was very comfortable writing about it. My relationship with Christ, the church and the church family, as a whole, has always been a spiritual inspiration and motivation surrounding all aspects of my life, including my quest to obtain a Master of Liberal Studies. Lastly, I had begun an idea of a gospel play many years ago and decided to bring it to fruition for my creative project. As an African American female playwright with a strong church foundation, it was really a no-brainer to choose the creative option of the MLS. I had no idea, one could tailor a thesis around a stage play. This was such an amazing opportunity.

What did you set out to accomplish?

I wanted to create a work reflecting some of the struggles around potential relationships between African American women and men in the church community from

a woman's view point. Additionally, I sought to show the difficulties of trying to adhere to strict church doctrine regarding sexuality. In this reflection, it was important to include honest dialogue from the women.

What were your artistic goals?

My main goal for *Wait on the Lord* was that it would be relatable and resonant with the audience. I, also, wanted the viewers to understand why the ladies made certain relationship choices, albeit against biblical principles. Furthermore, I changed the presentation format of the performance by breaking it into four acts to be performed each week for four consecutive weeks, similar to a television miniseries. While the traditional stage play format has been very successful, I wanted to try something different. I believe that with the right marketing, it could be very successful. In my proposal, I penned this work to be performed during Black History Month in order to link it to this traditional celebration. However this is not etched in stone. I believe this format could still be successful in another month, as well.

Did your ideas change as you proceeded, and why?

As I begin the tedious process of researching information for my graduate proposal, I reread the issues presented in *Wait on the Lord* surrounding black heterosexual relationships, church doctrine and abstinence vs. sex. I realized that the leadership in many (not all) black churches still addressed these issues the exact same way as the churches of yesteryear. There had been no evolution. Their religious stances were based on the belief that Jesus was the living and unequivocal Word of God. Hebrews 13:8 stated that: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

Therefore, their beliefs never changed. There were no grey areas surrounding sex. It was still articulated as an act only done under the sanctity of holy matrimony. If a premarital sex relationship was revealed, typically, there was no understanding or compassion. Furthermore, forgiveness only came with the guarantee of not doing it again. It was at this point in my research that I realized I needed to incorporate additional dialogue for the major female characters. These women needed to be the voices for so many women who remained in silent agony...constrained by church doctrines and compassionless leaders regarding their emotional and physical needs. It was essential for the audience to feel their pain and frustrations. I decided to incorporate monologues in which the characters directly faced and spoke to the audience. I wanted their sincere emotions reflected directly to the audience with the hope of somehow changing someone's strict moral compass to a gentler one.

In conclusion, the characters in *Wait on the Lord* are certainly not indicative of all African American churches, but merely an interpretative work by this author. However, it is a good indicator of the importance that religion has in African man-woman relationships. The pressures of the church, specifically its gender related social pressures, can be quite difficult for its female congregants; for acceptance, women are required to conform and commit to gender related church doctrine which can be quite challenging particularly for females, both incoming and seasoned. Additionally, the anxieties surrounding the tedious process of waiting on the Lord concerning relationships is intensified by the observance of abstinence. Sex between consenting adults is a natural, healthy occurrence that should only be between the two parties and God.

How did they contribute to the development of your project?

My formal and informal resources allowed me to breathe life into my project, as they offered a solid foundation surrounding black women's relationships in the church community. These resources were also instrumental in creating believable characters that could articulate real issues to the audience. As the playwright, of course I knew all about the characters, as I created them! However, my research pushed me to bond with them. I created back stories about the characters which are not included in the work, but in my notes. These back stories allowed me to better interpret their actions and dialogue. The journey was so great!

How did you use these resources to frame your ideas?

These resources connected the play's story line with necessary facts. It was very important to understand why a specific sector of the population made the choices they did. As for African Americans, it would be remiss to exclude the systemic inequalities they have faced and are still facing, as these barriers play a major role in their lives and ultimately relationships. As a black person, I was very familiar with them, however, my research allowed me to scholarly reconnect with the data and include the facts in my project.

What is the desired effect on your audience?

One of the main goals of this work was to make it relevant to the viewer. In addition to an actor's acting abilities, their portrayed character must be believable and/or relatable. The script is key in shaping what you want the audience to feel or focus on. The monologues

of the main female characters were instrumental in pulling the audience into their dysfunctional relationships with the men in their lives.

What makes your project interdisciplinary?

Wait on the Lord is interdisciplinary as it connects sociology, theology and theatre. This work focuses on the lives of six heterosexual women as related to the men they are involved with. It examines their struggles resulting from the lack wealth, as well as the shortage of black men resulting from mass incarceration. Additionally, the play's setting is the black church, which adds the religious dynamic to the forefront. It shows the patriarchal system that many African American churches are operating under and how it does not benefit women. Finally, this project is a stage performance, where the audience can walk with the actors into their scripted situations. Live theatre offers an instantaneous glimpse into the characters' lives. In doing so, the audience is able to visually and emotionally experience the characters' circumstances.

How well do you think you achieved the artistic goals you set out to accomplish?

I am very pleased with the end result of my work. It was always my desire to create a relatable work. I wanted the situations to really resonate with the viewer and or reader. In addition to my graduate committee, several other people have also read my play and expressed positive feedback. Ultimately, the actual performance of my work will determine my artistic goals. As a writer and director, I am very confident of my abilities and believe the outcome will be an optimistic one.

What insights did you gain?

Although I had this idea of a stage play entitled, *Wait on the Lord*, years ago...it was not until I began working through the proposal for the MLS program that it really came together in this format. I cannot imagine the outcome of this work, had I not been required to generate a graduate proposal. My research forced me to probe deep inside myself to sincerely identify what I wanted these characters to articulate. I have written numerous, comedic murder mysteries with very little or no research—which was fine. However, writing this stage play was different and necessitated more context. I needed a strong framework before envisioning the dialogue. I had to ensure that I understood how and why they got to where they were in their lives. This process was somewhat easier, as I was speaking from a black woman's point of view. Had this work focused on a man's point of view, the research would have tripled, if I truly wanted authentic African American males depicted.

Needless to say, there were so many rewrites and so many frustrations. Perfect lines written at 2:00 am were no longer acceptable when reread at 4:00 pm the next day. I wanted these women to say so much in this performance, however, time would not permit it all. Part of the success of a stage play is its timeliness. It cannot run too long or the audience's attentiveness is compromised; nor can you add too much background, as you run the risk of losing the emotional integrity of the performance.

The Social Background

Wait on the Lord identified some grim circumstances regarding man-woman relationships in the Africana church surrounding pressures from church doctrine adherences, however there are additional explanations to consider such as black unemployment, stratification of resources and mass incarceration.

Despite the fact that the economy and jobs are on the upswing, African Americans are still struggling to find employment. “The African American unemployment rate is an unprecedented 8.8%, while overall in the United States the rate is only 4.9%” (Glinton, 2016). The lack of finances for black men is a major deterrent in relationship building, particularly in the black church community, as many embrace a patriarchal and biblically based system which identifies men as ‘head of the households’. “The influence of a lack of personal wealth may explain recent changes in marriage patterns in the U.S., according to Daniel Schneider of Princeton University. Statistics show that for the past few decades, Americans have been getting married later in life and are becoming more likely to forego marriage altogether. Furthermore, people with less education have become increasingly less likely to get married as well” (Nauert, 2011). Whatever the reason, “results recently released by the Pew Research Center revealed that only 51% of adults in the United States are currently married. For African-American women, the marriage rate is even lower. According to the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, by the age of thirty, nearly 81% of white women and 77% of Hispanics and Asians will marry, but that only 52% of black women will marry by that age. In addition, black women are also the least likely to re-marry following divorce. Only 32% of black women will get married

again within five years of divorce; that figure is 58% for white women and 44% for Hispanic women” (Williams, 2011). I would argue the low statistics regarding marriage and remarrying for African American women encompassed the dire financial issues that specifically plagued their black men. The stratification of resources was just too much for their marriages.

Our society has always highly celebrated wealth. However, now, more than ever, money has become so very critical in our lives...and the lack thereof can result in total devastation. “Roughly three-quarters of Americans are living paycheck-to-paycheck, with little to no emergency savings, according to a recent survey released by Bankrate.com. Fewer than one in four Americans have enough money in their savings account to cover at least six months of expenses, enough to help cushion the blow of a job loss, medical emergency or some other unexpected event, according to the survey of 1,000 adults. Meanwhile, 50% of those surveyed have less than a three-month cushion and 27% had no savings at all” (Johnson, 2013).

However, despite these bleak circumstances surrounding finances, the church still offered peace, love and tranquility. You were taught to pray through your circumstances and believe your situation would change. God’s loving protection surrounded you, whether you were rich or poor. Furthermore, the African American church was not only a spiritual safe haven for blacks, it was also an institution of empowerment for a sector of America that had been systemically disenfranchised from education, politics, economics and society, as a whole. The church was a place where a sister or brother could hold respected leadership positions such as head deacon/deaconness, usher, secretary, trustee, or chairperson, whereas society would have never presented such opportunities. The

church was a place of second chances and declared that God did not judge you for your mistakes and they would not either. If you served your time in prison and professed to be a changed person, the church would welcome you with open arms and allow you to serve the Lord in any number of ways.”

In this age of mass incarceration, the church’s offer was refreshingly attractive. The NAACP’s Criminal Justice Fact Sheet offered some grave statistics of imprisoned African American men, “One in six black men had been incarcerated as of 2001. If current trends continue, one in three black males born today can expect to spend time in prison during his lifetime”. Furthermore, the NAACP listed the number of black women imprisoned as, “1 in 100,” (NAACP, Criminal Justice Fact Sheet). Unfortunately, our society does not value or even recognize *prison time served*. The stigma remained with the past offender in every aspect of their lives. The cold, hard, cruel reality of ‘*checking the box*’ as an offender was highlighted in Michelle Alexander’s book, *The New Jim Crow*: “[It] can be difficult to imagine what life would be like if discrimination against you were perfectly legal—if you were not allowed to participate in the political system and if you were not even eligible for food stamps or welfare and could be denied housing assistance” (Alexander, 157). She further wrote, “The shame and stigma that follows you for the rest of your life---that is the worst. It is not just the job denial, but the look that flashes across the face of a potential employer when he notices that “the box” has been checked—the way he suddenly refuses to look you in the eye” (Alexander, 157). The aforementioned denied services would be critically needed resources for someone recently released from the penal system. One of the first orders of business following one’s release would probably be job hunting. Looking for a new job is challenging for

anyone, however I would imagine for a former offender, the circumstances could be tremendously stressful...incorporating the added pressure of not having the basics such as: food and housing would certainly hinder the process...possibly to the extent of ending up back in prison. The National Institute of Justice reported that, "within three years of release, about two-thirds (67.8 percent) of released prisoners were rearrested; within five years of release, about three-quarters (76.6 percent) of released prisoners were rearrested; of those prisoners who were rearrested, more than half (56.7 percent) were arrested by the end of the first year" (National Institute of Justice). These figures confirmed the lack of viable rehabilitation practices by our correctional institutes. It is a vicious, no-win cycle.

Historically, African Americans needed a place of refuge and solace. They needed a place where they were not immediately and automatically discounted upon sight. The church offered that to them. Brothers and sisters were allowed to freely speak their minds and hearts of the disheartening things going on around them. It was called, testimony service. During Sunday morning worship services, there was a space for the congregation to talk about the goodness of the Lord and/or their trials and tribulations of that week or upcoming week. It lasted about an hour. You were not required to 'testify,' but welcomed to do so. The laity of the church would share their work stories and tales of discrimination and unfairness....and the congregation would offer amens in agreement, as they, too, had experienced similar things. The church became a place of therapeutic healing for African Americans. The church always believed that black lives mattered, even if they were not the original organizers. They trusted and believed the Bible and knew that our lives were important. Even in its imperfect state, the church was and will always be....

Wait on the Lord

A Play in Four Acts

Cast of Characters

<u>Alicen Clark:</u>	Best Friend of Sharon Rutland-Barnes, Member of On This Here Rock Church
<u>Allen Barnes:</u>	Husband to Sharon Rutland-Barnes, Member of On This Here Rock Church
<u>Bishop Howell:</u>	Founder & Senior Leader of On This Here Rock Church
<u>Cheryl Martin:</u>	Best Friend of Tonya Watson, Member of On This Here Rock Church
<u>Child:</u>	Selling Candy Door-to-Door
<u>Earl Myers:</u>	Husband of Jheri Myers, Deacon at On This Here Rock Church
<u>Evangelist (EVG.) Sullivan:</u>	Runs Revival at On This Here Rock Church
<u>Jheri Myers:</u>	Wife of Earl Myers, Member of On This Here Rock Church
<u>Margaret Jackson:</u>	New Bride, Member of On This Here Rock Church
<u>Sharon Rutland Barnes:</u>	Wife of Allen Barnes, Best Friend of Alicen Clark, Member of On This Here Rock Church
<u>Sheila Taylor:</u>	Wife of Spencer Taylor, Member of On This Here Rock Church
<u>Spencer Taylor:</u>	Husband of Sheila Taylor, Member of On This Here Rock Church
<u>Tonya Watson:</u>	Best Friend of Cheryl Martin, Member of On This Here Rock Church

SCENE ASIDE

SETTING:

Ladies Dressing Room at Church

AT RISE:

MARGARET sitting at a vanity talking to herself in the mirror.

MARGARET

I'm getting married, y'all!! It's been such a long road to this day...but a good, good God-fearing man found me.

(sigh)

Every journey isn't necessarily a happy one.... But, every journey has a purpose....sometimes it takes us a while to figure it out. Waiting on the Lord....is a journey.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I

Scene 1

SETTING:

Scene opens with alarm clock ringing

AT RISE:

In walks SHEILA TAYLOR dressed for work and trying to wake up her husband so he can get ready for work. She's dressed very nice for work; he has a very nice pajama set on

SHEILA

SPENCER!..... SPENCER!!!! Get up! It's 7:00. You're going to be late for work!!!

SPENCER

(SPENCER'S sleeping in the bed.)

Huh?? SHEILA???.... What??

SHEILA

It's 7:00... you're going to be late!

SPENCER

Oh... I'm not going back to that sorry job!!!

SHEILA

What? Why?

SPENCER

That penny-anny job!! Making only \$13.50 an hour. When I lived in Detroit...

SHEILA

(SHEILA interrupts SPENCER)

You made \$28.00 an hour. I know, you've told me, but this is the fourth job you've had this year.

SPENCER

Baby, I've got to find a better paying job. It's demeaning for a brother to only bring home that little bit of money every week!!

SHEILA

Well, how much do you think you're going to bring home every week if you don't even have a job?? I mean..come on, baby...your unemployment benefits are about to run out!

SPENCER

Now, look.... Don't start harping on me! The bills are being paid!

SHEILA

I know they are... I'm paying them!!!!

SPENCER

SHEILA, what difference does it make who pays them; we're one...just like the good book says!!

SHEILA

SPENCER, I know we're one... but this *one* is tired of carrying the load!

SPENCER

Now, come on baby

(SPENCER gets up and cuddles SHEILA)

Daddy's gonna find a job; don't you worry...

SHEILA

(laughing)

Ha-ha. Stop it SPENCER....Stop..haha! Well...alright. Listen, we have a few bills that need to be paid. Can you go online & pay them for me?

SPENCER

Now come on baby. Since I'm not working today, I was planning on sleeping in.

SHEILA

(sighs)

SPENCER...you are something else....please!

SPENCER

I'll do it after I get up...I promise. Okay?

SHEILA

Okay.

SPENCER

Shoot...I might as well get up now....and take a shower. Listen, what were you planning on cooking tonight?

SHEILA

Oh... I don't know. Why?

SPENCER

Let's go out to eat and take in a movie. How 'bout it?

SHEILA

Well, I'm probably going to have to work late tonight. I won't get home until about 630...oh...and tonight is the first night of the revival at our church.

SPENCER

Man! Another revival?? How much reviving do we need? Who is it this time?

SHEILA

(laughs)

Evangelist MICHAEL Sullivan...he's supposed to be a really good preacher.

SPENCER

Yeah, yeah, yeah....they all are 'supposedly' good preachers until we hear them preach.

(SHEILA shakes head)

SHEILA

Alrighty then.

SPENCER

Uh, listen. I put a couple of suits in the lay-a-way. I'm going to get them out today.

SHEILA

The lay-a-way....who still does that??

SPENCER

Uh

SHEILA

(SHEILA interrupts SPENCER)

Well, we only have about \$1,200 in our checking account. How much more do you have to put on them?

SPENCER

Oh, about sixteen-hundred.

SHEILA

Sixteen-hundred dollars!!??

SPENCER

Well, the suits were only \$400 apiece, but I had to get accessories!!!

SHEILA

Eight-hundred dollars worth of accessories?!!!!????

SPENCER

Yeah...I got a couple of ties...shirts...two pairs of shoes.

SHEILA

(SHEILA looks at SPENCER like he's crazy)

SPENCER

Oh come on baby... the shoes were on sale; I got them for less than \$350 apiece!! You know I love snakeskins!!

SHEILA

(Uses her cell phone calculator app to calculate numbers while SPENCER talks)

SPENCER

Whaddya' doin'?

SHEILA

Adding it up.....It sounds like you didn't put much money down on that **lay-a-way**.

SPENCER

Well... I didn't really put them in the lay-a-way-lay-a-way. I more like put them on, uh....hold.

SHEILA

So just where were you planning on getting sixteen-hundred dollars?

SPENCER

Out of our savings; we won't miss it.

SHEILA

SPENCER!! We are trying to get a house! Now we agreed that we wouldn't touch the savings account!

SPENCER

SHEILA, you worry too much; we have \$42,000 dollars in that account. We'll still be able to get our house

(SPENCER starts cuddling SHEILA and tries to butter her up)

Now you want yo' daddy to look good now don't you?

SHEILA

(giggles)

SPENCER

And you want yo' daddy to be happy now don't you?

SHEILA

(giggles)

Alright-Alright...but SPENCER, you've **got** to stop dipping in the savings....otherwise we'll never get a house.

SPENCER

Okay, baby. Have a good day at work *(hugs and kisses)*. Think about **all this** all day baby....cause I'll sho' be thankin' about **that**.....Umph-umph-umph-Lawd ham-mercy!

SHEILA

(giggles, blushes)

SPENCER

(Gets a towel and exits to shower.)

SHEILA

(Opens and looks in her briefcase, then looks up and talks to the audience.)

Oh, I know what you're thinking, but I love SPENCER...and SPENCER loves me. Yeah, he's had four jobs in the last 6 months, but so what. He's trying to find the best job he possibly can—for me---for us. I am saved, sanctified, baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost, and so is SPENCER. We've been married for two years. We're members at 'On This Here Rock Church'. I am a faithful tither. So what, if I have to support my husband for a little bit. He's my husband!! I know what the Bible says, but it was written so long ago; it's a new day now. Roles have changed. I went to college and received a Bachelor's in Chemical Engineering and an MBA. I make a lot of money and have great benefits. I didn't need a man to support me. I needed a man for, uh, other things.

(she smiles)

Let's face reality here...good ole' common sense church reality. There are no men. Where are they?? Where are all those wonderful brothers everyone keeps telling the women....especially women over 40....to be equally yoked with? I bet a bunch of you women out there want to know too!!!! Well, before I met SPENCER, I wanted to know! I went to all my church's functions; couldn't find them. State functions; couldn't find them. National functions; couldn't find them. And you Bible scholars, don't give me that Scripture about 'he that findeth a wife, findeth a good thing,' because number one, the Scripture doesn't say 'he that findeth.' It says 'whoso findeth'... get it right!! Anyway, I just started looking myself! Well, SPENCER visited, 'On This Here Rock' one Sunday; He had just moved into the area and he looked *so good* and *so tailored* and *ooo*.... Well, after our services were over.... all the single women swooped down on

SPENCER like vultures swoop down on a dead piece of carcass! Just made me sick! So I didn't have an opportunity to talk with him *that* Sunday, but I found out where he lived and I just showed up one day to, uh, welcomed him into our fair city. Well, I asked him out to dinner and I paid. Well, **that** blew him away. He said that he wasn't used to women paying the check. Well, we started dating and one thing led to the other, and then SPENCER asked me to marry him & of course, I said "YES!!!!"

(pause)

I can see right now that some of you ladies don't approve of my actions. Some of you are looking at me with disgust and distaste.... saying that you'd never support a husband....saying what a fool I am....saying I should have waited on the Lord. Well, you're those same ladies that go home every night and day **alone**. At least I have a man..... **how long has it been since you've had one!!?**

(abrupt exit)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT IScene 2

SETTING: JHERI and EARL MYERS' bedroom

AT RISE: EARL is dressed for work & apologizing for what happened last night. JHERI'S sitting on the side of the bed...the audience is unable to see the bruised side of her face.

EARL

JHERI, I'm so sorry. I've just been under a lot of stress. I didn't mean to hurt you. I love you so much!

JHERI

EARL, look...just...just go to work.

EARL

Come on baby... let's not fight anymore. I'm sorry. Would you forgive me?

JHERI

Look EARL, I have to forgive you if I want to see Jesus, but I am not going to forget it.

EARL

Huh! Well, the Bible says that you got to forgive me and if you won't forget it, you ain't forgiven me and you ain't gonna make it in on that great gettin' up morning...Haha!

JHERI

Well, the Bible also says that husbands are to love their wives.

(JHERI gets up and shows her black eye to EARL)

And if you think this is love, you've got it wrong, Buddy!!

(starts crying)

EARL

Look.... Stop crying. I said I'm sorry; it won't happen again.

JHERI

(looks at EARL and shakes her head)

EARL

No... I mean it this time. I really prayed last night and asked the Lord to really help me. I made a vow to myself that I would never hit you again!!

JHERI

You've said that before. Why would this be any different?

EARL

I swear fo' god...believe me...believe in me!

JHERI

I want to believe in you, but I can't hide this forever. People at church must think I'm the clumsiest person alive. One week, I had a bruise on my leg because I tripped. Another time, I had a black eye because I ran into the door. Another time, I had a busted lip because I tripped down the stairs. How many more accidents am I going to have, EARL?!?!

EARL

Look....I said I made a change!!

(EARL looks at JHERI'S black eye)

You have make-up to cover that, don't you?

JHERI

It might cover up the black eye, but it's not going to do anything for the swelling. I'll just have to stay away from church until it goes down.

EARL

Yeah, that's a good idea. Well, I'll just tell them that you're not feeling well. That's the truth.

(laughs)

JHERI

(doesn't laugh with EARL)

Yeah, that's the truth.

EARL

Now, come on. I said I said turned over a new leaf. You should be rejoicing.

JHERI

EARL, you're going to be late for work.

EARL

(checks watch)

Whoa!! You got that right; I'm outta here.

(EARL hugs and kisses JHERI)

JHERI

(JHERI doesn't respond, simply stands there)

EARL

I love you JHERI—you know I love you!

JHERI

(JHERI kinda nods)

Bye.

EARL

Oh, before I forget....we have a deacon's meeting right before the revival tonight...so, don't cook anything for me for dinner. I'm gonna be rushing when I get off work, so I'll just grab a sandwich or something. See ya', baby. *(exits)*

JHERI

(JHERI begins to make up the bed, doesn't finish, stops, sits down, and looks at her eye in a hand-held mirror, then sadly talks to the audience.)

EARL and I have been married for three long years. When we first met, I was saved and very active in my church; EARL wasn't....but he was coming to 'On This Here Rock Church' faithfully. Oh, my pastors warned me to, uh, *wait* on the Lord....but I was so lonely and I got so tired of... of... waiting. I guess....when EARL began coming to the church and started talking to me, I didn't care. I started listening. Oh, he really courted me....we'd go to dinner, concerts, plays...everywhere...we were always together. He was so sweet then. I didn't, really, bother to, really, seek the Lord like I should have.

(large sigh)

Then EARL asked me to marry him. I told him that he needed to give his life to God. Well, guess what? That next week he gave his hand to the preacha man...and the week after that we were setting our wedding date. One thing I knew...b-before we got married, was that EARL had a temper, but I didn't care. He even slapped me once...but he cried and apologized so much that I...I..just let it go. He was under a lot of stress on his job. I knew he would never do it again...he was so sorry for hitting me.... Looking back, I can see so clearly all the signs telling me not to do it.... all of the Holy Spirit's warnings, but I didn't listen. I never once asked God if this marriage was in His will, because in my heart.....I knew it wasn't. I just felt I could help him....I-I just wouldn't make him mad.....I wanted to be married. He was a Christian...so he said...and I said "yes."

If I had it to do all over again, I wouldn't. I'd rather be alone, and that's something I never, ever thought I would say.

(long pause—pacing)

Don't get me wrong....There've been a some good times, some happy times....but most of the time I-I pretty much live in fear & so much shame.

(She starts to cry) I tried talking to one of the church mothers about him.... She told me to pray more & to leave him alone when he got off work.... She said that he needed time alone after working all day, so I shouldn't talk to him about any issues or problems. But, none of that seemed to really work. It just wouldn't be right for two Christian people to get a divorce. I just can't imagine that. What would the pastor say? I just ask the Lord to help me.....just help me....and show me.... cause I just don't see a way out...

(JHERI runs off crying very hard)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT IScene 3

SETTING:

Scene opens at ALICEN CLARK'S apartment.

AT RISE:

ALICEN is very upset and crying. Her best friend, SHARON, is trying to console her. They are sitting on the couch in the living room.

SHARON

ALICEN, please stop crying.... ALICEN!

ALICEN

SHARON, you just don't understand. I love him; I thought he loved me. How could he just break it off?! How could he???

(more crying)

SHARON

I know it hurts, but God is going to help you through this. I'll be here for you too. I-I hate seeing you like this.

ALICEN

No, no... you don't understand. I had been waiting and waiting on the Lord. I just knew ALLEN was the one. I knew he was going to be my husband

(more crying)

You just don't understand!

SHARON

Maybe he's not the one for you. If he was...well...the Lord wouldn't allow anything to come between you. Maybe the Lord has someone else for you.

ALICEN

What?? Oh, I don't know. I love him, but... but... oh maybe you're right. This hurts so bad...I love him so much. When he told me it was over, I..I..I just cried and cried. I thought he was the one. You just don't understand!!! I thought he was the one!! You just don't understand!!!

(more crying)

SHARON

ALICEN, what do you mean, I don't understand? Why do you keep saying that?

ALICEN

Oh, SHARON. You're my best friend, but I never even told you. I..I..I couldn't tell you...

SHARON

Tell me what?

ALICEN

I...I slept with him!

(more crying)

SHARON

What??!!?

(SHARON looks very surprised)

ALICEN

He was my first

(crying)

I thought that... that... he'd break up with me if I didn't. I just don't know what happened. We were supposed to get married, not break up. I can't believe this is happening.

SHARON

Well... I'm going to talk with that dirty rotten dog!!

(SHARON'S very angry!!!)

ALICEN

Oh, please don't tell him I told you. I'm so ashamed. I never should have done it. I...I just thought we'd be together forever!

SHARON

Listen, ALICEN. I'm going over to ALLEN's right now! He's not going to get away with this!

ALICEN

It's not going to do any good. He said it was over! I begged him to give us another chance. Oh, God....I felt like I was a dog...begging....

(cries more)

SHARON

(Consoles ALICEN a bit more, then SHARON exits.)

ALICEN

(ALICEN composes herself and then talks to the audience.)

ALLEN and I had been going together for about a year and a half, off and on. We'd go together, then we'd break up, go together, break up... over and over. But I loved him, and I still love him. Anyway, I have been so committed to God for almost six years when I met Allen, and he had just gotten saved. One Sunday he came to one of our musicals. He introduced himself to me, and we started seeing each other. After about six months, we started talking about marriage. We hadn't agreed on a wedding date yet...but we looked at so many different engagement rings. About a year into the relationship
(drops head... in shame)

he asked me to sleep with him. I told him absolutely not. I told him I couldn't do that....that I was waiting...until I got married. Well, he said that we **were** going to be married and what would be the harm.

(long pause)

I knew it was wrong

(starting to cry a bit)

I knew that it was wrong. I knew that I should've waited on the Lord, but

(crying more)

I...I thought that I would lose him, if I didn't. Silly me... I lost him anyway

(crying)

Well, a couple of days ago, we got into an argument---I don't even remember what it was about. We haven't spoken to each other since. Then, today he came over – I thought to apologize – but he told me that it was over....he even asked for the ring back.

(crying)

I couldn't believe it! I gave him everything that I could possibly give.

(more crying)

I called my best friend, SHARON, and she came right over. She's always been there for me. We've been friends since....forever. Right now, she's going over to talk with Allen, but I know it's not going to do any good. It's too late. I could see it in his face... it's over...

(crying)

I can't for the life of me, even remember, why we argued. I don't even care. Nothing matters...nothing makes sense...he completed me...what am I going to do without him?? I...I thought he was the one. How can it just be over? How can he just walk away from my love? I gave him everything... Oh God, why is this happening to me?

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT IScene 4

SETTING: Scene takes place at ALLEN Barnes' apartment.

AT RISE: ALLEN is in his living room, with briefcase open, looking over some papers. We hear extremely loud knocking, banging, and kicking on the outside of the apartment door.

ALLEN

What in the world????

(ALLEN gets up to answer the door)

SHARON

(Busts in like the police and knocks ALLEN backwards)

ALLEN

SHARON? Hey now! What's up with the heavy knocking??

SHARON

Who the devil do you think you are??!!

ALLEN

Wait a minute...

SHARON

You dirty rotten dog!!!!

ALLEN

Now wait a minute.... calm yourself....

(ALLEN tries to hug SHARON)

SHARON

Don't try and hug me! I want some answers. I guess you thought you were some type of player, sleeping with ALICEN and sleeping with me at the same time!!!!

ALLEN

Now, baby... calm down. It wasn't like that at all. Now, you told me to let her down easy.

SHARON

Well, I sure didn't mean for you to sleep with her!!! I'm over there consoling her and she blurts out that she slept with you. I almost fell off the couch!!

ALLEN

Baby, it didn't mean a thing. It's been over with her, whether she knew it or not. That happened a while back. It's over; it's you and me now. You know that... don't you?

SHARON

(SHARON turns her back to ALLEN with her arms folded defiantly and pouts)

Yeah.... Right!!!! You never told me that you had sex with her!!

ALLEN

It wasn't anything to tell! It happened a long time ago....before we hooked up!

ALLEN

(leaves the room)

SHARON

Where are you going!!!!

ALLEN

(ALLEN comes back with a small gift wrapped box and gives it to SHARON)

SHARON

Humph! What's this?

ALLEN

You'll never know until you open it.

SHARON

(SHARON opens gift; it's a very nice sized engagement ring)

Oh, my goodness.... ALLEN!! I-It's beautiful!

(SHARON kind of starts to cry as ALLEN speaks)

ALLEN

I'm not proud of the way we got together. You and ALICEN being best friends and all, but I couldn't help myself. I wanted you...not ALICEN. Listen to me baby....I tried to stop my feelings, but I couldn't. I asked the Lord to help me and show me the way. That

night, I had a dream of you and I walking down the aisle, and I **knew** that **you** were the one. I had lots of women before coming to Christ, but after I gave my life to the Lord, I wanted to find that one special girl, and settle down. Oh, I dated a few sisters, but they weren't for me. Then, the devil sent me a counterfeit and made me think it was ALICEN. But she wasn't the one!.... Something was ... was missing. Something wasn't right. Then, the Lord put **you** in my spirit. Oh, I tried to ignore it. Baby, I tried to block it, but it was God's will for us to be together, and I don't want no other woman. I love you, SHARON.

(ALLEN gets down on one knee)

Will you marry me?

SHARON

Oh, ALLEN. I love you too. Yes... yes, I'll marry you!!!

ALLEN & SHARON

(ALLEN AND SHARON hug and while ALLEN hugs SHARON, ALLEN wipes the sweat from his forehead and mouths the word "whew!")

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT II

Scene 1

SETTING: TONYA's apartment living room.

AT RISE: TONYA'S friend, CHERYL MARTIN, is seated on the couch with pop and chips. TONYA's in a chair.

CHERYL

TONYA... what's wrong?

TONYA

Nothing.

CHERYL

*(CHERYL places emphasis on the word
MICHAEL when the next line is delivered)*

You haven't said two words since I came over. Is it Evangelist **MICHAEL** Sullivan?

TONYA

I just don't understand... MICHAEL and I were supposed to hook up after service last night.

CHERYL

Hook up? Where were you going to **hook up** that late?

TONYA

CHERYL, don't start with me.

CHERYL

Look, I'm just concerned about you. Evangelist Sullivan's older than you.

TONYA

Not that much... besides, age doesn't matter.

CHERYL

Yeah...somehow it never does to men...go figure.

TONYA

Aww...come on, now!

CHERYL

I'm sorry, but low-key, I don't trust him. Why would he tell you to keep your relationship a secret? And why doesn't he come to see you during the day?

TONYA

I told you!!! He has to meditate on the word during the day. Anyway, he doesn't socialize a lot while he's in revival.

CHERYL

Really? Well he hasn't stopped 'socializing' with you!

TONYA

(TONYA gives CHERYL a look)

CHERYL

Look, I'm sorry...He is shady, girl.

TONYA

CHERYL, I wish that you'd just be happy for me. I mean, we're all not blessed like you. You have a wonderful boyfriend!

CHERYL

I would be so happy for you if I could just shake this bad feeling....but I'm sorry, I'm not trying to hurt your feelings.

TONYA

(Cell phone rings.)

Oh, that might be him. Hello? I told you that I would be paying on that bill in two weeks, when I get paid! Do not call me again!!

CHERYL

(CHERYL starts laughing)

Girlfriend, I've got to go. You coming to the revival tonight?

TONYA

Now, you KNOW, that I'm gonna be there! My baby, EVANGELIST SULLIVAN, is preaching and there's only two nights left!

CHERYL

(Shakes her head)

TONYA

(TONYA gets up and walks CHERYL to the door, then TONYA comes back and sits down.

TONYA talking to herself)

Yes, this is my husband, EVANGELIST MICHAEL SULLIVAN. God bless you. I'm TONYA Sullivan. Oh, just call me Sister Sullivan....Lady Sullivan....First Lady Sullivan....Elect Lady Sullivan... Hahaha! Oh, I like the sound of that. I can't wait to tell CHERYL that MICHAEL and I are getting married. But I can't, because MICHAEL told me not to tell anyone. I really don't understand all of that either. Oh well..

(she checks her watch)

This is really starting to tick me off. He stood me up last night and he hasn't even called. Wait until I see him tonight.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT II

Scene 2

SETTING: Church Scene, Interior of Cathedral.

AT RISE: It's implied that this evangelist has been at the church for about two weeks and tomorrow will be the closing. This is the end of service.

BISHOP HOWELL

Come on Saints..say Amen!

CONGREGATION

(CONGREGATION loudly praising God)

The joy of the Lord is our strength!!

ORGANIST & BISHOP HOWELL

(ORGANIST starts 'tuning up' with the BISHOP.)

BISHOP HOWELL

Alright now, I'm not gonna get started. The preacher has preached, but when I think of the goodness of Jesus, and all he's done for me, oo-oh..alright now...cut that out Bro. Organist

CONGREGATION & ORGANIST

(quiets and settles)

BISHOP HOWELL

God has truly blessed 'On This Here Rock Church' in this Revival. EVG. SULLIVAN has been preaching hard every night. Say Amen. I know he's tired. He's been here almost two weeks and tomorrow night, it's coming to a close. Did everyone get an envelope? We need everyone to bring a *special* offering on tomorrow night. Alright now...everybody stand...We'll be dismissed by EVG. SULLIVAN. Come on preacha'!

(BISHOP HOWELL performs a closing prayer.)

EVG. SULLIVAN & BISHOP HOWELL

(hugs)

EVG.SULLIVAN

Bishop Howell, for the last two weeks and I have truly enjoyed ministering here at On This Here Rock Church. I'm sorry to see it end. I would sure like to make this an annual revival.

BISHOP HOWELL

Uh....let me get back with you...

EVG.SULLIVAN

(EVG. SULLIVAN looks a bit shocked, tries to act like everything's fine)

Get back with me?? Uh....All right!! Praise God...

BISHOP HOWELL

(The Bishop exits and talks with other members of the congregation)

EVG.SULLIVAN

(EVG. SULLIVAN goes to greet everyone...different church folks are shaking his hand.)

God bless you....God bless you. Keep praying for me.

ALLEN

(ALLEN looking at some woman)

CHURCH FOLKS

(Observe ALLEN looking at women behind his wife's back)

MARGARET

(MARGARET goes up to EVG. SULLIVAN to shake hands.)

EVG. SULLIVAN

(EVG. SULLIVAN gives MARGARET a seductive 'up & down look')

MARGARET

Evg. Sullivan, I truly have enjoyed you. These nightly services have been awesome! I have bought **all** your tapes. And all those prophecies that have went out....some of them have already come to pass. You are **truly** an anointed & appointed man of God.

EVG.SULLIVAN

Well, thank you so much Sister. I've truly enjoyed being here. God has truly reigned on us these two weeks. I am but a vessel to be used, molded, shaped, formed, created, carved, designed, patterned, and modeled by the Lord. It's not me; it's Him.

(EVG. SULLIVAN Points upward, then kind of looks around suspiciously.)

I...uh...have been meaning to speak with you.

MARGARET

M-m-me? About what?

EVG.SULLIVAN

(EVG. SULLIVAN isn't talking too loudly.)

God has told me something concerning you.....and me, but I'm not sure how you'll handle it. Some women aren't willing to be an evangelist's wife.....

MARGARET

An evangelist's wife???? Oh God...me.....and you??

EVG.SULLIVAN

Sh-sh-sh. The Lord isn't ready for His will to be revealed yet. Now, here's what the Lord wants you to do. First of all, tell no one. When the time is right, the Lord will let us know. Secondly, pray all day tomorrow...God will let you know that what I've said is the truth! And the truth will MAKE ya' free....you're in the process of being made right now, sister!! Yaaaas lawd!!

TONYA

(Sister TONYA comes up and interrupts with a slight attitude.)

Uh, Evg. Sullivan, I need to talk to you!

EVG.SULLIVAN

Just a moment, Sister. I'll be right with you

(EVG. SULLIVAN pulls MARGARET away from TONYA.)

MARGARET

Evg. Sullivan, I..I'm speechless. Now I'm going to pray just like you've instructed me. But you being an anointed man of God, I already believe it and receive it.

EVG.SULLIVAN

Thank you Jesus! Now, remember...say nothing to no one. I'm not going to say anything more to you about it until after the Revival on tomorrow night....You see...when I'm in Revival anywhere, I don't really fellowship with anyone. I meditate

on the word so I can hear from the Lord. But when it's over, we're going out for a late dinner and talk about this thang....okay?

MARGARET

Oh praise God. Yes..I'll see you tomorrow.

EVG.SULLIVAN

God bless you.

MARGARET

(exits)

TONYA

(TONYA comes over with somewhat of an attitude.)

What were you talking to her about?

EVG.SULLIVAN

Just about the goodness of the lawd, my beautiful Sis. Watson...is there something you want to talk about?

TONYA

Yeah...What happened to you last night?!!!!

EVG.SULLIVAN

(EVG. SULLIVAN whispering.)

Sh..sh....keep your voice down. I had to meditate last night and I couldn't be disturbed. I'm sorry, but uh...let me make it up to you. Why don't you come by my hotel room in about an hour?

TONYA

Well....I guess so. We do, need to talk. When can I tell everyone that we're going to be married?

EVG.SULLIVAN

In due time...but the lawd let me know that it's going to be a while before **His will** can be revealed.

TONYA

What?? I don't underst—(interrupted)

EVG.SULLIVAN

Look...I'll see you in about an hour...we can talk then, okay?

TONYA

Uh...o-okay....

EVG.SULLIVAN

Uh....listen. They switched my room to 645.

TONYA

Oh...why?? You've stayed in 442 for the two weeks you've been here. Why would they switch you to another room at this late date?

EVG.SULLIVAN

I don't know...it's no big deal...

TONYA

Well, why would they switch you?

EVG.SULLIVAN

Who knows....uh...those things happen, sometimes.

TONYA

I don't understand that. What's the point?

EVG.SULLIVAN

Well...uh...the point is...uh....the bed broke. Anyway, don't keep me waiting too long!!

TONYA

The bed broke!?!?!?

EVG.SULLIVAN

Sh-sh. Uh...it was defective. So...I'll see 'ya soon?

TONYA

(TONYA kind of drops her head and looks away.)

EVG.SULLIVAN

What's wrong?

TONYA

I've been saved for two years. I've been *waiting* on the Lord. I'm starting to have doubts about this whole thing. Are you sure the Lord said this was okay?

EVG.SULLIVAN

Absolutely. The Lord knows what his servant needs. He knows that I need a wife. A young wife....one that'll be able to keep up with me. The life of an evangelist is a tedious one. He's allowing us to come together to make sweet love because of his love for us. He loves you and me so much that he's allowing us to show our love for one another. Isn't God good???!! Isn't he merciful? Hallelujah!!!

(EVG. SULLIVAN saying Hallelujah loudly, as a display. Folk are looking at him saying how anointed he is and praising God with him.)

EVG.SULLIVAN

Look up, Sister. God is well pleased!!!

TONYA

Thank you Jesus!!

(TONYA smiles to herself...looks up to Heaven.)

EVG. SULLIVAN

(EVG. SULLIVAN winks at TONYA and EVG. SULLIVAN exits.)

CHERYL

Boy, what was all that about??? He must have given you a prophesy out of this world!!

TONYA

Oh, CHERYL, he did.....he really did.....and I'm so happy! I can't talk about it right now....but when the time is right....you'll be the first to know!

CHERYL

(CHERYL shakes her head & looks very concerned)

TONYA

(happily exits)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT II

Scene 3

SETTING: SHEILA and SPENCER'S apartment.

AT RISE: SHEILA and SPENCER ate dinner out and took in a movie and are just walking into the apartment.

SPENCER

Man; that movie was stupid. I was ready to go after the first 15 minutes!!!

(SPENCER goes and hangs up his coat in his closet. The audience should be able to see all the suits and shoes.)

SHEILA

Really? I loved it. But love stories are my favorite movies!

SPENCER

SHEILA....you're just a romantic!

SHEILA

(SHEILA goes to hang up her coat in his closet.)

SPENCER

SHEILA, baby...not in my closet. Come on now. Your closet is upstairs.

SHEILA

Honestly, SPENCER. That closet ought to be for both of us, but your stuff is cramming it all up!

SPENCER

(SPENCER smiles and shrugs.)

SHEILA

You know, I feel a tad bit guilty about not going to the revival tonight.

SPENCER

Hey...we're entitled to take a night off!

SHEILA

Yeah...well, let's make sure we go tomorrow. It's the last night.

SPENCER

Hey, no problem. Evg. Sullivan be preaching! I really enjoy the brother!

SHEILA

Well, it's late. I think I'm going to take a quick shower and turn in.

SPENCER

Oh, okay. Well, I'm going to see if I can catch a movie on the late show.

SHEILA

SPENCER, if you're going job hunting in the morning, don't you think that you'd better get some rest?

SPENCER

I'm not going job hunting until next week. I'm going to take a little vacation between jobs because when I start a new job, I won't be able to take a vacation for a whole year!

SHEILA

(SHEILA looks at SPENCER, puzzled.)

SPENCER....you've taken several vacations between each of the four jobs you've had this year!!

SPENCER

(SPENCER walks behind SHEILA, hugs her.)

Oh, come on, She-She. Daddy always gets another job, now doesn't he??

SHEILA

(SHEILA'S somewhat smiling, but trying not to.)

Now, SPENCER, don't start that "She-She" stuff. You need to look for a job tomorrow.

SPENCER

Oh, I'm sorry. Is She-She mad at me? Me gonna do better....I promise. And

when I start looking next week, I'll take the first job that calls. Okay?

SHEILA

(SHEILA'S giggling by now.)

Okay, SPENCER. You make me sick!!

SPENCER

Now I know She-She doesn't mean that!

SHEILA

(laughs)

Goodnight SPENCER.

SPENCER AND SHEILA

(SPENCER AND SHEILA hug and kiss.)

SPENCER

Goodnight, baby. I'd watch the TV in our room, but I know you have trouble sleeping when it's on, so I'll stay down here and watch it for a while. That way you can get some good rest and be ready to go to work in the morning.

SHEILA

Oh, thank you SPENCER...you're so thoughtful! I just love you.

SPENCER

I love you too, baby.

SPENCER AND SHEILA

(SPENCER AND SHEILA grin at each other....SHEILA exits....)

SPENCER

(SPENCER turns on the TV and checks all the channels with the remote....checks his watch....then cuts the TV off. Next SPENCER pulls out a map from somewhere and opens it up and takes a red marker and begins charting out a route. SPENCER'S talking to himself as he does it.)

Okay...now...yep. That's the easiest way to get there. Yeah...I sho' don't need nobody's GPS! I got this!! HaHa... Yeah, well....in a few months...ha-ha.....I'll be hitting the highway!!!

(SPENCER folds up the map and puts it away. Then SPENCER gets up and flips the calendar forward a few months and nods his head, then begins to go upstairs to bed.)

SPENCER

Speaking of hittin'....let me go upstairs and tap that a little bit and make her night!!!
Haha!

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT IIScene 4

SETTING: JHERI and EARL'S bedroom.

AT RISE: JHERI has reading glasses on reading her Bible in the bed. EARL comes into the room with his coat on. EARL'S just gotten home from the revival.

EARL

Hey, baby...

JHERI

Hello, EARL.

EARL

Hoo-oo. Evg. Sullivan preached tonight. He's too tough. JHERI, you should have heard him!

JHERI

Yeah, I should have but I had to stay home because of the black eye....remember?

EARL

Now, look. I said that I was turning over a new leaf. Don't keep bringing that incident up....it's not necessary!

JHERI

Well, I'm sorry to keep....bringing it up, but every time I look in the mirror, I can't help it. Maybe when the pain and swelling goes away I'll be able to stop....bringing it up!

EARL

(EARL looks a bit agitated.)

You know...you bring a lot of this on yourself.

JHERI

(JHERI looks very strangely at EARL.)

Excuse me?

EARL

Look...I'm not gonna fight, no matter how much you try and instigate.

JHERI

Instigate??? Never mind.

EARL

Yeah....never mind. Boy, oh boy...I was really feeling good when I came in, but you always seem to find a way to kill my spirit.

JHERI

(JHERI says nothing...continues reading her Bible.)

EARL

Your attitude towards me, brings out the worst in me. Then I end up doing something that I don't want to do to you!! ...And you say that it's all my fault??!! Man!!....Go fix me something to eat!!!!

JHERI

You want a sandwich?

EARL

No, I don't want a sandwich. I could make that myself! Fry me some more of that tilapia we had for dinner.

JHERI

I put the rest back into the freezer; it's frozen.

EARL

That's what you've got microwaves for!!

JHERI

(JHERI looks at her watch.)

EARL

Whatcha' looking at your watch for? Do you have some place to be?

EARL

I SAID....Do you have some place to be?

JHERI & EARL

(JHERI says nothing; puts her Bible down and gets up to go fix the food. EARL stands in her way.)

EARL, you said that you wanted fish, so I'm going to unthaw it and cook it for you.

EARL

(EARL'S standing in front of JHERI, blocking her way. EARL'S getting angrier by the minute.)

You just couldn't have left well enough alone, could you?

JHERI & EARL

(JHERI says nothing....JHERI tries to go around EARL, but EARL keeps getting in her way.)

JHERI

EARL, please...I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said anything else about it.

EARL

(EARL raises his voice.)

Yeah, you got that right. And you know what? I'm **looking** at the problem in this marriage. It's you!! **You'd** provoke Mother Teresa!

JHERI

EARL, I'm sorry. Just let me go cook....I don't wanna fight...please...I-I'm sorry...

EARL

(EARL's hollering by now.)

Yeah, you're sorry alright. I'm so sick of this crap. That's why we fight. You're always picking. If you can't take it, then don't dish it out!

(EARL grabs JHERI by the collar and pushes JHERI back on the floor.)

Because I don't have time for your mess!!

(EARL kicks JHERI.)

Now get up and cook me some fish!

JHERI

Owww!!... (she's crying) Alright...please, stop it. Please...I'm sorry.

(JHERI'S still on the floor.)

EARL

Just look at you. Sis. JHERI Myers...you're pathetic. What kind of Godly wife are you?? You ain't showin' your husband no respect! I told you that I changed, but you just wouldn't accept it. You just kept pick, pick, picking until I exploded. You bring everything that happens to you on yourself!!

JHERI & EARL

(JHERI'S crying as EARL'S talking.)

JHERI

(JHERI gets up.)

I'll go and fry the fish.

EARL

Yeah, do that. I'll be eating in the den, so bring it to me when it's done!

JHERI

(exits crying.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT III

Scene 1

SETTING:

Scene takes place at ALICEN CLARK'S apartment.

AT RISE:

ALICEN'S sitting in her living room, eating some soup on a TV tray, reading the paper. Cell phone rings.

ALICEN

Hello? Oh, hi mom....nothing. I had a lousy day at work today and I'm just sitting here having some soup trying to unwind. How 'bout you? (She laughs.) Who's having a Revival? Oh...really. Yeah, you're talking about that evangelist that was here about two or three months ago, uh...Evg. Sullivan. Oh....he is?? Well, he was dynamic when he was in Revival at our church. I might go check him out one night. Yeah.....I need to go tonight.....bad as my day was! (She laughs.) Yeah....no, it's over mom. I haven't talked with ALLEN in months. Oh, I'm getting over him. It's going to take a while though. Mom, please don't start. I still have feelings for him and I really don't want to hear what you think of him because I already know! Well, that's your opinion. He wasn't that way with me. Okay, whatever mom. Let's just drop it, please. No, I haven't been seeing much of SHARON these days. I don't know....we're both busy. Yeah, plus I've kind of been to myself lately. Yeah....I haven't felt much like talking to anyone. Yeah, I know. Well, she hasn't been coming to church a lot. What??? You think she's going to another church? Hum....I didn't know that....I...I...I've got to call her. Yeah, okay. I love you too, mom. Bye.

(ALICEN covers her face and kind of starts to cry.)

ALICEN

No, I'm not going to do this today. I've got to get over him. It's been almost three months...I've got to move on.

(ALICEN wipes her face and continues to eat her soup and read the paper. The phone rings again.)

ALICEN

Hello...uh hi. How are y....

(The caller interrupts her)

What? No, I haven't gotten to that section yet. To be honest, I really don't even read it. Whadda ya' mean? Something interesting for me to see?

(ALICEN kind of laughs.)

What is it? Oh, okay. Bye.

(ALICEN begins *thumbing* to the marriage license section of the newspaper.)

ALICEN

What in the world would interest me in the marriage license section?

(ALICEN begins looking and finds marriage license section. ALICEN begins reading section aloud with much anger and very loudly!!!!)

ALICEN

ALLEN BARNES and SHARON RUTLAND applied for a marriage license!?!

(ALICEN jumps up and starts pacing and talking aloud.)

ALICEN

What??!? I can't believe....

(ALICEN grabs the paper again and looks at it and starts crying.)

ALICEN

This has got to be a coincidence! H-how could she? How could *they*?! I used to tell her everything about ALLEN! Applied for a marriage license?!?! Oh, God. Everybody at church...in town... is probably talking about it. How could she? She was supposed to be my best friend. I don't believe this.... How could they do that behind my back? Couldn't they have had the decency to tell me...to prepare me. Oh, God. (crying) Please help me. I've got to talk to SHARON myself. (She looks at the paper again.) How could she? I can't believe this. There must be some mistake...she...how could she? It can't be...it must be some kind of coincidence. It can't be the SHARON and Allen that....not SHARON.

(ALICEN grabs her purse and coat, crying.....exits, slamming the door.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT III

Scene 2

SETTING: Scene takes place at SHARON RUTLAND'S apartment.

AT RISE: SHARON's setting the table for dinner. SHARON has some sweats on....very casual. A knock on the door is heard. SHARON goes and opens it without looking out. ALICEN is at the door. SHARON AND ALICEN stand and stare at each other for a moment. Then, SHARON breaks the silence.

SHARON

ALICEN!? Uh...we're...uh, I'm...just getting ready for dinner.

ALICEN

(ALICEN pushes SHARON into the dining room of the house & looks at the table being set for two people.)

You having company, SHARON?

SHARON

Uh...yeah. What's up?

ALICEN

What's up, huh? That's all you have to say to me?

SHARON

Is something wrong?

ALICEN

(ALICEN kind of laughs sarcastically.)

Is something wrong? You know...

(ALICEN'S voice starts to tremble; she's trying not to cry.)

When I was driving over here, I began to think about how long we had been friends. We've been friends since grade school. We've shared our secrets, our hopes...dreams. I truly cherished our friendship. And when I read that you and ALLEN had applied for a marriage license

(ALICEN hands SHARON the crumpled newspaper)

SHARON

(SHARON interrupts ALICEN.)

Oh, ALICEN. I...I'm so sorry. You weren't supposed to find out like that. ALLEN promised me that it wouldn't be in the paper. He said he had some connections. I'm so sorry...I swear. I never meant for this to happen....it..it just happened. You've got to believe me.

ALICEN

So, it's really true. I still didn't believe it....I couldn't believe it...until just now.

(somewhat crying)

SHARON

We didn't plan on falling in love...it just happened. I-I wasn't deliberately trying to sabotage your relationship....it just happened. It..he...he just wasn't for you, SHARON.

ALICEN

Oh, I see...but he was for you, right?

SHARON

ALICEN...if ALLEN was truly the Lord's will for you, you two would still be together. We truly didn't desire to hurt you.

(Things are starting to get a little loud and a little bit fired up!)

ALICEN

Well, exactly what was your desire? How the hell did you think I would react? I would never do such a thing to you and I never would have believed that you would have done this. You are a scheming, manipulating, cunning demon from the pit!!!

SHARON

Look...I never schemed to get ALLEN...it just happened. As a matter of fact, ALLEN approached me!! It was during one of your MANY break-ups.

ALICEN

Yeah...and you were right there...waiting!!

SHARON

Look, I know you're upset, but he isn't the man for you. And the sooner you accept that, the better off we'll all be!!!!

ALICEN

Oh, you're so right. He sho' ain't the man for me, but I've got news for you sister. He ain't the man for you either!!

SHARON

Oh...now that's where you're wrong. You see, we're getting married tomorrow at the Justice of the Peace. So, he's definitely the man for me!!

ALICEN

You're such a fool, SHARON. He was going with us at the same time! He's so dog dirty, he was probably sleeping with us at the same time too!! As a matter of fact, there's no telling how many more women he's been sleeping with!!

SHARON

There were and are no other women. He only slept with *you* as an afterthought. It didn't mean anything to him!

ALICEN

What?! Ha! Is that what he told you? I thought you had a little more sense than that. He slept with me because that's what hoes do!! He's a male hoe!!! And you're a fool for marrying him!!

SHARON

No, you're the fool...he put a ring on it, baby!!!!

ALICEN

Yesterday I would have married ALLEN in a heartbeat, but today is a different story. All his darkness has been brought to light! He's going to dog you just the way he dogged me...whether you have a ring or not! And you're too asinine to realize it!

SHARON

No...what's asinine is for me to be arguing with you. I'm the winner and you're the loser, so what's the point? Deal with it, baby!!

ALICEN

You may think you're the winner for now, but you're going to soon find out that you're the all-time loser!!

SHARON

No...you're the all-time loser. You couldn't keep yo' man satisfied so he had to look elsewhere. I just happened to be there. As a matter of fact, God placed me there, so better luck next time sister!!!

ALICEN

God placed you there!!? God didn't have anything to do with that mess. That's between you and the devil!!!

SHARON

You've got a lot of sense and a lot of nerve!!!!

ALICEN

I can't believe that you let a low-down bastard come between us, but it takes one to know one!!!

SHARON

You know, I'm going to pray for you tonight because you need much prayer!!

ALICEN

Well, the Lord certainly isn't going to hear that prayer because he doesn't hear a sinner's prayer!! And, baby, you're in a bunch of sin!!

SHARON

Well, listen to Little Miss "Holier-Than-Thou." What about all those fire testimonies about how you were *waiting* on the Lord?! You are such a hypocrite and you have the audacity to call me a sinner. You're a sinner and a stumbling block. You were testifying one thing, but you were going home doing another! Well, I hope you enjoyed it while it lasted, because the charity stops here, baby and tomorrow, I will become Mrs. ALLEN BARNES and you'll go back to your sad, pathetic, lonely little nothing life!!

ALICEN, SHARON, ALLEN

(ALICEN grabs SHARON and they begin to wrestle all over the floor. ALLEN comes out with a robe and a towel around his neck, he's kind of wiping his face...making the audience think that he's just gotten out of the shower...ALLEN sees the women wrestling on the floor and grabs whoever he can and separates them.) (If SHARON and ALICEN can't actually wrestle on the floor, they'll stand up and wrestle with each other and knock over a bunch of stuff!!)

ALLEN

Hey, what's going on?? Stop it!! SHARON, stop it!! ALICEN!!!

ALICEN

Get your hands off me!!

(ALICEN is talking to ALLEN)

ALLEN

(After a bit, ALLEN finally separates SHARON and ALICEN. Of course, the apartment is going to be a wreck!)

What is going on?

(dramatic pause)

SHARON! What happened?

(Dramatic pause...ALICEN AND SHARON are both out of breath and glaring at each other.)

SHARON

She read in the paper that we applied for a marriage license!

ALLEN

Oh....I, uh...am really sorry A—

ALICEN

(ALICEN interrupts ALLEN while he is saying her name.)

Save it...I've already heard SHARON's sorry apology! It really doesn't matter. You two deserve each other! I just hope I'm around to see you both reap all the mess you've sown!!

(ALICEN cries..then exits quickly and slams the door.)

ALLEN

SHARON, are you okay?

SHARON

Yeah...I thought it wasn't going to be in the paper!

ALLEN

My connection at the newspaper couldn't do anything. I meant to tell you that, but I got busy and forgot. I'm sorry, baby.

SHARON

I know this whole situation is pretty tight, but she was my best friend and she didn't deserve to find out like that. Oh, God. She'll never forgive me, but I guess I didn't really expect her to. I mean...if the shoe was on the other foot...I probably wouldn't either.

ALLEN

Look....what's done, is done. We're getting married tomorrow. That's all that really matters to me.

(ALLEN AND SHARON hug and then they both look around.)

ALLEN

Boy, it looks like a tornado hit this place!

SHARON

Yeah..it sure does. Well, dinner isn't quite ready. I'll straighten up a bit.

(SHARON starts picking up things.)

ALLEN

Oh, okay.

(ALLEN starts picking up too.)

SHARON

That's okay, I'll do it. Listen, would you run to the store and pick up some garlic bread and parmesan cheese?

ALLEN

Yeah, sure. Let me go get some clothes on.

(exits)

SHARON

(SHARON continues to straighten up. And while straightening up, SHARON begins to talk to the audience.)

I know this looks bad, but I really didn't take ALLEN away from ALICEN. It just happened. They were destined to break up anyway. When Allen approached me, it was during a period of one of their many break-ups. I never lusted after him, we just talked...haha about everything...we really connected...it-it felt so right. I wish ALICEN would just understand that the Lord is allowing this to happen for a reason, and the reason is...they aren't supposed to be together. I wish she could understand that.....but I don't know. I never really had any doubts about Allen and me...until

this evening. ALICEN was so hurt...I can't say I blame her. Allen should have told me that he couldn't stop it from getting in the paper!! I don't know exactly what I would've done, but at least I would have been prepared. She caught me totally off guard! Allen loves me...I know he would **never** be unfaithful to me (she sighs). I'll be glad when this whole thing just blows over! Here it is, the night before my wedding day...I should be the happiest woman alive...especially me being a single woman in church...tight as the man situation is there!! I waited on the Lord.....as long as I could...maybe this wasn't the traditional way a man meets a woman....but hey....tradition is dying.....nothing is really done in the traditional manner anymore! Hey look It's a dog-eat-dog world out there and the church sho' ain't no different. I'm sorry ALICEN is suffering.....but a woman's gotta do, what a woman's gotta do!! She'll get over it. It's all gonna work out...everything is gonna be fine. I gotta believe that. I love ALLEN and I'm going to become Mrs. Allen Barnes tomorrow and we're going to live happily ever after!

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT IIIScene 3

SETTING: Scene takes place at SHEILA and SPENCER'S apartment.

AT RISE: SHEILA enters, very agitated. She has her payroll check directly deposited into their bank account. She went to make a withdrawal and found out that their entire checking account had been cleared out.

SHEILA

SPENCER!!!! SPENCER!!!!!! Where are you??????

(SHEILA exits.....still calling SPENCER'S name loudly. Then, SHEILA re-enters.)

SHEILA

Oh, SPENCER! Wait until I get my hands on you. I can't believe he took all the money out of our checking account without discussing it with me!! My whole paycheck was just direct deposited this morning and here it is 1230 in the afternoon, and it's gone!! And we just talked about this! SPENCER TAYLOR you went too far this time!! I guess I'll make a sandwich and go on back to work, but when I get off from work...Mr. SPENCER and I are going to have a another long, long talk!!

(SHEILA exits.....music plays, indicating that time has passed(Perhaps a ticking clock or something)---The scene opens up again, to SHEILA and SPENCER TAYLOR'S apartment. SHEILA has just come in from work. SHEILA leaves her coat on while talking on the telephone.)

SHEILA

SPENCER!! Um...his car still isn't here, but I thought that he would be. He took it in for a tune-up this morning. Maybe the mechanic found some major problem. Poor SPENCER...he might be stranded there. I'll give them a call.

(SHEILA gets her address book out of her briefcase, finds and dials the body shop's number.)

SHEILA

Yes...this is SHEILA TAYLOR. My husband, SPENCER TAYLOR, brought in his BMW for a tune-up this morning and I was wondering if you're still working on it...(a slight pause) Oh...you finished it around 9:30 this morning? Okay. Well, exactly what was done to it? Just a routine tune-up, huh? Okay...what? "for our road trip?" What trip? We're not taking any road trips. Uh...okay...thank you. (she hangs up) Well, he certainly didn't clear out our checking account to pay for the car! Ooo!! Wait until I see him. Taking all the money out of our checking account! He's got a lot of sense!! (She checks her watch) It's 6:30...he had better have a good explanation!

(SHEILA takes her coat off and goes to hang it up.....then notices that the closet is empty!!)

SHEILA

Where are all of SPENCER's clothes and shoes? He must have moved them somewhere else...but where? We don't have any extra space!

(SHEILA hangs up her coat and stands there a minute...looking kind of strange. Then, she runs off the set...and we hear her talking!)

SHEILA

Oh, my God....have we been robbed? All of SPENCER's things are gone. They didn't touch my stuff. They must have wanted men's clothes??! What the...?

(SHEILA comes back out...panicking...pacing...)

SHEILA

Oh, my God! Let me call the police. I can't believe this. Let me call 911!!

(SHEILA runs to the phone and gets ready to dial...then stops and thinks...)

SHEILA

No...no...I..I..I'm being paranoid.

(SHEILA begins typing something in her cell phone---she is checking her bank account.)

SHEILA

I know I'm being silly... This is crazy. I can't believe I'm doing this. This is crazy.... I should be calling the police, not checking our savings account.

(SHEILA, looking at her cell phone & then her expression drastically changes to a look of horror/confusion/sadness/unbelief.)

SHEILA

I can't believe....all our savings...all my savings..... gone.....zero balance?? I worked so hard saving that money. I can't believe SPENCER did that...

(starts crying)

Oh, God. He's left me..I can't believe that. No...no...there must be some explanation. He must have needed the money for something...

(SHEILA starts making calls via her cell phone to SPENCER'S friends to find out if they've seen him. SHEILA crying as she waits for the recipient to answer...SHEILA straightens up, stops crying when the person answers the phone.)

Oh, God. No, please. No....uh...Hello...MICHAEL. This is SHEILA. Yeah...uh, is SPENCER over there? No....have you see him or talked to him today? Oh, I was just, uh, wondering. No...nothing's wrong. Okay, thanks....bye. Oh, God. No..

(SHEILA continues to dial numbers.)

Hi SUSAN, this is SHEILA. Okay...uh, is SPENCER with JERRY? Oh, no. Oh, I was just wondering. Thanks anyway...bye. No....oh. Please God...no...SPENCER... you didn't do this to me. Hello, Jeffrey...is SPENCER over there? Oh...you haven't.

Okay..tell him to uh...call me if he comes over. Yeah, thanks. Oh God.

SPENCER...no....no...I loved you. You wouldn't do that to me. Hello, JOHN.....Hi, it's SHEILA. Is

SPENCER there? When's the last time you talked with him? Oh, I see.

No....everything's fine...bye.

(SHEILA cries really hard.)

SHEILA

Oh, God. What am I going to do? What am I going to do? How could this happen to me? No....I can't believe this...what will I tell everyone? SPENCER, please come back. Don't leave me alone...not like this...oh, God. Oh, God. What am I going to do.

SPENCER, I loved you. Please, God. Make him come back, please. I need him. Oh, God....no...no...no. Please...this isn't fair. Why? Why God? What am I going to do? How could this happen to me? I can't believe this...I didn't deserve this. Oh, God.

Why? I'm not a bad person...why? Why?? Why?? What am I going to tell everyone??

(lots of crying)

Oh God...oh God....Oh God.....

(SHEILA's crying hard the whole time.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT III

Scene 4

SETTING: Scene takes place at JHERI and EARL MYER'S home.

AT RISE: JHERI's vacuuming with a broken arm. EARL walks in very angry...stomping & slamming doors. JHERI turns off the vacuum cleaner.

JHERI

What's the matter?

EARL

I didn't get that promotion to foreman. They gave it to a white boy that had less time than me!!

JHERI

Oh, EARL. I'm so sorry.

EARL

I know that job backwards and forwards. That place is so prejudice...they won't give a brother a break!

JHERI

But EARL, aren't there several black foremen there already?

EARL

Yeah, but they're Toms....I ain't kissin' no white man's ass.

JHERI

DAN is a foreman...he's not a Tom. You two are pretty good friends, aren't you? Maybe he can put in a good word for you.

EARL

No....he was a friend until he started tripping!

JHERI

What happened?

EARL

Oh, it was a couple weeks ago. A white dude and me got into it. Dan took the white boy's side over mine. That tripped me out.

JHERI

Honey, was it your fault?

EARL

That don't make no difference. The brothers are supposed to stick together...no matter what. That Uncle Tom Negro...I can't believe he took the white boy's side.

JHERI

(JHERI starts to say something, but decides not to.)

EARL

Well, go on.....say it, JHERI. I know that you'll take anybody's side before you take mine!!

JHERI

Now, EARL...that's not true.

(sighs)

Let me get back to my cleaning. Your dinner's in the oven.

EARL

Nothing ever goes right in my life. I deserved that promotion. I should have gotten it. I'm at work every day...I never miss...I'm always on time. In fact, I'm there 15 minutes early most of the time. I am so sick of always getting the short end of the stick. I'm considered the bad boy on the job because I don't take any mess. If I was a Tom, there'd be no problem. I'm sick of it!

JHERI

(Turns the vacuum cleaner back on and continues to vacuum.)

EARL

(Snatches the plug of the vacuum out of the wall and starts shouting)

Cut that vacuum cleaner off. Can't you see that I'm talking? Aren't you even listening to me?

(EARL'S very angry.)

JHERI

Oh, I'm sorry. I thought you were just blowing off steam, so I just thought that I'd finish my, uh...I..I'm sorry.

EARL

You're sorry?

(EARL shakes his head)

You got that right. I don't get any respect around this house. I'm trying to talk to you and you cut me off!!

JHERI

EARL, I'm sorry. I...I thought you were finished. I..I'll go and get your dinner. Why don't you sit here and....and relax.

(JHERI starts to exit.)

EARL

(EARL, gets in JHERI'S way, prevents JHERI from exiting.)

What did you cook?

JHERI

EARL, please...let's not fight.

(JHERI, crying and trying to cover her already broken arm.)

JHERI

Well...uh..I..I cooked peas...and meatloaf...and..

EARL

(EARL, interrupts JHERI)

Hamburger meat! I bust my butt working every day and every time I turn around we're having the same thing. Why do you keep cooking that crap?!? The only reason I'm staying at that racist place is for you. I'm trying to make a good life for you. We can eat better than hamburger meat! If it weren't for you, I would have been gone from that job!

JHERI

EARL, I'm sorry. I'll fix something else.

EARL

(hollering)

Fix something else?!?!? After working all day, do you think I want to wait for you to cook something else?

(EARL grabs JHERI by the collar)

JHERI

(crying)

EARL, please don't...my arm. You've already broken it

(crying hard)

EARL

SEE WHAT YOU MAKE ME DO TO YOU!! YOU BRING THIS SHIT ON TO YOURSELF!!! I gotta get outta here!!!!

(exits, slamming the door)

JHERI

(JHERI, crying while winding up the cord on the vacuum cleaner. JHERI puts it away & cries uncontrollably.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT IVScene 1

SETTING: Scene takes place at SHARON and ALLEN BARNES'S apartment.

AT RISE: SHARON is checking the clothes before taking them to the cleaners.

SHARON

Man, this cleaning bill is going to be scandalous...all these clothes! Oh, my goodness, look at all this junk in my pocket. That just doesn't make sense. What's this in ALLEN's pocket? A hotel receipt? Oh, God....what's the date? Humph! That's the day he claimed he had to work late. He is such a liar. (pause) Oh, God..today is our six month anniversary and I don't know how we made it this far. (cries...and covers her face...then the phone rings...she gets up to answer it) Hello? Hello? Another hang up. She must have been looking for ALLEN...humph. (she'll note the name on her caller id) KELLY ROSS? Well, I'll just call KELLY. Hello, KELLY. This is SHARON BARNES. You just called my number. What? Honey, don't try and lie...your name is on caller ID--so cut it. Who did you want to speak to? Never mind nothing!! Who did you want to speak to? Oh, ALLEN BARNES, huh? Well, ALLEN is married and this is his wife, so don't call here anymore. Is that clear? Well, I don't care if he didn't tell you that he was married. I'm telling you!!!! (she slams the phone down and starts to cry) I hate him---I hate him---I hate him. I'm so sick of this marriage. I hate myself for being so stupid. ALICEN was so right.....I gave up my best friend for ALLEN. What a fool I was. He hasn't been faithful to me from day one!! Oh, God....this whole thing is my fault. I should have never gotten involved with him, let alone marry him. Nobody expects this marriage to last. (more crying) Nobody...everyone is waiting for it to fail....including me. I don't know what to do. Oh, God.. I'm so miserable. I've made a horrible mistake....everything's a big mess. I really made a big mistake marrying ALLEN. Why didn't I wait on the Lord???

(SHARON breaks down and cries hard. As SHARON's crying, we hear keys in the door and SHARON quickly tries to recompose herself. SHARON doesn't want ALLEN to see her crying.)

ALLEN

(ALLEN, walks in with a bouquet of flowers)

Happy six month anniversary!

(ALLEN gives SHARON the flowers, but notices the tears)

SHARON, what's wrong?

SHARON

One of your girlfriends called for you...KELLY ROSS!

ALLEN

She's not my girlfriend. What are you talking about? She's a work associate of mine. Uh...what did she want?

SHARON

(SHARON just looks at him and shakes her head.)

ALLEN, she told me that you didn't tell her you were married, so don't bother to lie.

ALLEN

No, I didn't tell her that I was married...it never came up. I told you, she's a work associate. We don't have time for idle chit-chat. You probably made her nervous when she called. I'll call her back right now.

(ALLEN calls from the house phone)

SHARON

This little game you're playing isn't necessary...not anymore.

ALLEN

Oh...hello, Kelly. This is ALLEN. Good and yourself. That was my wife and she's a bit jealous. Now what can I help you with? Oh, I see. Well, I didn't bring those papers home with me, but come to my office first thing in the morning. Okay? Oh, no problem. Thank you. Uh, listen, Kelly....would you tell my wife why you called? I would certainly appreciate it and she really needs to hear it.

(ALLEN hands SHARON the phone.)

SHARON

I don't want to talk to her!

ALLEN

Look, you just accused me of something that wasn't true. Talk to her!

SHARON

(SHARON reluctantly takes the phone.)

Yes? Oh really? Alright...whatever....bye.

ALLEN

Now, see? Don't you feel bad?

SHARON

(SHARON just kind of stares at ALLEN.

SHARON rolls her eyes.)

What about this hotel receipt? That's the night you were supposedly working late.

(SHARON gives ALLEN the receipt)

ALLEN

That's correct...I was working late. Tony and me had a bunch of work to do, but the office was being fumigated so we got a hotel room.

SHARON

Fumigated? Well, why didn't you come here or to Tony's? Why spend money on a hotel room to work?

ALLEN

Come on, SHARON. You **know** we wouldn't be able to get any work done here or at Tony's. We'd be looking at TV or something....you can call Tony...he'll verify it. Oh...& thanks for finding that receipt....I'll need to turn it in to get reimbursed from my job.

SHARON

Yeah right....reimbursed. You always tie up **all** the loose ends! You're very clever like that. You've got an answer for every question. I guess all that schooling your mama worked so hard for you to have, has really paid off. (shake head) I'm taking these clothes to the cleaners.

(exits)

ALLEN

(ALLEN goes and checks to make sure

SHARON'S gone. Then, ALLEN takes out his cell phone and calls KELLY back).

Kelly, it's ALLEN. Why did you call my house? I gave you my cell phone number. Look...you call the number I give you! Yeah, I'm married. Well, you never asked. Listen, baby, don't play the player. You already knew that I was married...your girlfriend told you! A-huh...see there...haha... I know a lot of things... Yeah, now don't be too mad...hahaha..... Didn't you have a good time the other night? Haha! Haven't I

been treating you real good? So what!!....We have an open marriage....ha-ha. What?? It didn't sound open to you? Well uh, let me make it up to you. Now, don't say that. Maybe we can discuss it in...uh...New York. Yeah... I've got to go there on business in a couple of weeks. I would sure love for you to go with me. Oh, I'll take care of all the arrangements. Yeah, you just bring every sexy nightgown you have---better yet...don't bring any---you won't need 'em. Hahaha! Alright, now that's my Kelly girl. Ha-ha...okay... I'll call you tomorrow. Bye now.

(ALLEN then dials another number)

Hey man, what's up? Nothing much...except I'm in the doghouse again...hahaha..Yep... Listen, remember you were telling me about that hotel in Chicago that runs a special honeymoon package? Yeah, which hotel was it? Oh, okay...now what was it? Okay....a carriage ride around the city. Yeah...dinner at La Louvre. Oh, yeah...two nights at the hotel. Okay...breakfast in the room...ha-ha. Yeah, SHARON will love that. Well...uh...she's a little sad, so I thought some time in Chicago & shopping might cheer her up. Oh, yeah...she'll love that. Thanks, man. I'll call them right now. Oh, you got the number on you. Yeah...alright got it. Thanks, man. Oh yeah..see ya.

(ALLEN hangs up and starts dialing and then sighs a sigh of relief and says)

Man, I'm good!

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT IV

Scene 2

SETTING: Scene takes place at TONYA'S apartment.

AT RISE: TONYA is bundled up in a blanket on the couch. CHERYL is over. The doorbell rings and TONYA gets up (with much difficulty). That's when the audience sees that she is very much pregnant. At the door, a CHILD will be selling candy bars.

CHILD
Would you like to buy a candy bar for \$1.00?

TONYA
I'll take four.

CHILD
Wow...thank you!!

(exits)

TONYA
CHERYL did you want one?

CHERYL
Yeah...sure!

TONYA
Oh...let me see if I can catch her.

CHERYL
What?? I thought one of those were for me. Girl, forget it. Sit down.

(CHERYL sits back down with much difficulty.)

TONYA
Girl...no, these are mine!!

CHERYL

Well, don't. That's just another trick of the enemy. You made a mistake....mistakes happen. All you have to do is ask God for forgiveness. Everyone makes mistakes, but God is so good and so forgiving. He just loves us anyway. Just learn from what happened... watch and pray...

TONYA

Yeah...I know...

CHERYL

But getting back to that perpetrating evangelist....you really should let the pastor know.

TONYA

Why? What good is it really gonna do? It's, us, women that bear & carry the shame. Men are so far removed....all the judging eyes are on me. That's why I haven't been to church in a while. It's too much....

CHERYL

TONYA....I agree...there is definitely a double standard... But, no one has any right to judge you. A mistake is a mistake. The true followers of Christ will always choose love over judgment. Don't allow a few ignorant people, claiming to be Christians, to cause you to stop attending church. That is not the will of God.

TONYA

You're right...I know.... It's just kinda hard right now.

(crying)

CHERYL

I know it is, but I'm here for you... and others are, too. They just didn't know how to reach out to you. We are all helpers one to another.

(CHERYL and TONYA hug.)

TONYA

I just wish.

(TONYA breaks down crying.)

CHERYL

Oh, TONYA...don't cry?? What...?

TONYA

I just wish....I would have waited. Everything in my life would have been so different....if I just...would have waited...on the Lord.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT IVScene 3

SETTING: Back to the same set from the beginning of the play.
The Ladies Dressing Room at Church.

AT RISE: MARGARET JACKSON is still sitting at a vanity,
but she's now, wearing her wedding dress and veil.
Women are around dressing...combing hair...busy.
Someone's doing her makeup.

MARGARET

Okay, everyone...thanks for everything, but if you don't mind, I kinda need to be by myself.

WOMEN

(WOMEN, they all kiss her and smile and exit.)

MARGARET

(MARGARET looks at herself in the mirror...then closes her eyes.)

Oh, God..thank you so much for this beautiful day. I'm so happy!

(MARGARET opens her eyes, turns and faces the audience.)

MARGARET

(grinning)

I'm getting married...to a wonderful evangelist. My soon-to-be husband's name is CARL M. SANDERS...and God made him especially for me! I am so glad that I waited on the Lord...whew! Four years ago, I had a close call. If I wouldn't have waited, I could've made the biggest mistake of my life. EVG. SULLIVAN was his name. He had been running a Revival at our church and it was next to the last night. Well, he told me that I was going to be his wife. I was shocked, but I believed him because he was supposedly a man of God. Well, he told me to pray the next day. At first, I wasn't going to do it because I believed that he was telling the truth, so I figured what was the point But, I prayed, a sincere prayer to the Lord and he gave me to fast along with that prayer..and the Holy Spirit...(she throws up her hands) Thank you, Jesus. Let me know that he wasn't the one, but oh...you just don't know. I wanted him to be the one. Well, to make a long story short, I told EVG. SULLIVAN that we needed to wait. I suggested that we write to each other and then we'd go from there. So we exchanged phone numbers and addresses, but you know what? He never wrote or called me, and later I found out that he had gotten SISTER TONYA WATSON pregnant. I felt so bad for her. But at the same time, I thanked God because it could've been me. Anyway, about 2-1/2

or 3 years later, I met EVG. CARL SANDERS. We began to talk and text...lots of texting.

(giggles)

Really getting to know one another. It was such a beautiful thing....we really felt like soul mates. Sooo...when he asked me to marry him, I said, 'yes,' because we had prayed about this union...separately and together. You see, I had to be absolutely sure that this was the Lord's will, not mine...but his. (points upward) I was determined to wait on the Lord, and here I am, waiting for my music to be played....(she smiles then pauses and gets a serious look on her face) I'm very blessed, but there are some women at my church that I feel very sorry for. JHERI MYERS is one. She is so sweet, but she married an abusive husband. Oh, she always has an excuse for the bruises and the black eyes, but we all know. I pray for her all the time. She always looks so sad. (pause) And, SHEILA TAYLOR. Her husband left her about 4 years ago and cleared out all their bank accounts. She's never really been the same after that. She tells everyone that she's okay and that's she's over him, but she still wears her wedding ring. And, SHARON RUTLAND-BARNES. (moan) She married her best friend ALICEN'S boyfriend or former boyfriend..or something. It was just a mess. She lost a good friend and gained absolutely nothing. He's a womanizer and *still to this day*, chases after anything in a skirt. I could go on, but I didn't want to become one of those women. They didn't wait on the Lord, but I think they felt the way I sometimes did. Sometimes the loneliness would be almost unbearable. I would cry myself to sleep, wondering..how long Lord? I would feel so empty and unloved...and incomplete. All the married sisters would tell me to wait on the Lord, but they went home to their husbands. They didn't really understand, or so I thought. But they told me something that really stuck with me. They told me that while I was single, it was the perfect time to get very close to the Lord. They called it prime time. So, I prayed and I stayed in my word....and I waited...and it was so hard sometimes, but I trusted and believed God's word when it said, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." So, I held my ground. And, sometimes I felt like God had forgotten me, and it looked like everyone was being blessed except for me. And sometimes I felt like...what was the point? I'm sure that's the way some of my church sisters felt...that's why they rushed into marriages that weren't God's will for them. They didn't seek the Lord because they were so lonely...and believe me...I went through those same emotions, those same fears and frustrations. But the difference between me and them was that I waited. Thank you, Jesus!! And I am a living testimony that if you wait on the Lord...

(The wedding march music is played.)

Your waiting won't be in vain.

(MARGARET gets up, smiling.)

Well, I've got to go....that's my cue!

(Musical Interlude)

BISHOP HOWELL

I present to you MR. and MRS. CARL SANDERS. Come and receive this beautiful couple.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

THE END

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Current Positions:

- Department Coordinator, University of Notre Dame
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Education

- 2016 Indiana University-South Bend, IN
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Murder Mystery Plays/Character Performances:

Murder Fit For Royalty© 2013	Queen Mother Abigail Avis Queen	JustUs Performances Theatre Troupe
The Jingle Bell Strangler© 2012	Agnes Foster Old Country Woman	JustUs Performances Theatre Troupe
The Obituary Writer© 2012	Heborah Darrison English Obituary Writer	JustUs Performances Theatre Troupe
Wondering Eyes, Deceiving Looks...Murder's Brewing© 2012	Priscilla Herring Aristocrat-Type	JustUs Performances Theatre Troupe
1,2,3 Shots... You're Dead© 2012	Big-Bone Ruby Rigby Southern Bar Flapper	JustUs Performances Theatre Troupe

Murder Mystery Plays/Character Performances (Cont'd):

Up on the Rooftop, Dead Man
Falls©
2011

Elouise Worthington
English Hotel Manager

JustUs Performances
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That's the Way the Cracker
Crumbles©
2010

Elouise Worthington
English Hotel Manager

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Just Hanging Around Could Mean
Murder©
2010

Liza
Cockney Hotel Maid

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From the Motherland to Another
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2009

Shanghazi
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Film:

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